NEWSLETTER of the BRITISH COLUMBIA
FIRST NATIONS FORESTRY PROGRAM

Five Year Overview of the BC First Nations Forestry Program

See details pages 5-8

Building Internal Forestry Capacity

The Yaqan nukiy (meaning "the people where the rock is standing") is where one can find canola fields, orchards, and pure mountain water cascading through the forests. Located in southeastern BC near Creston, this area is home to the Lower Kootenay Indian Band (LKIB) who have been developing various natural resources based economic opportunities with great concern for the environment. The Lower Kootenay Indian Band has, for example, been working on establishing a guide outfitting and hunting business. They have also been focusing on encouraging individuals in their community to develop technical forestry skills. There are opportunities for band members to become more involved in the technical side of forestry such as working on their woodlot or working on the community-driven forest license. But members require sufficient technical training to do this type of work.

Lower Kootenay Indian Band office.

continued

March 2001

Canada

Lower Kootenay Indian Band

The band is part of the Creston Valley Forest Corporation which holds a community-driven forest licence. Members include the Town of Creston, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Creston Area Economic Development Commission, the East Kootenay Environmental Society and the LKIB.

"The reason for this partnership is because the people in the Creston Valley are interested in preserving local water quality, which is a community concern," explains Joe Pierre, Band Manager of the LKIB. "These groups have come together to determine what would be acceptable logging practices around the watershed area from a community point of view."

There is a high priority placed on ensuring water quality because a well-established beer company brews from the local water. Special care is taken when logging is carried out in the area. For example, vegetable oil is used as the hydraulic fluid in the skidder operating on their forest licence. Although it is more expensive than petroleum-based products, it is safer for the environment in the event of leaks, explained the band's logging contractor.

With the financial support of the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) in 2000, a band member is receiving valuable technical forestry training and work experience on the community-held forest license under the direction of a professional forester. Training is being provided on tree selection and marking for selective logging, timber reconnaissance and cruising, silviculture prescription work, forest development planning, cutting permit layout, and log valuation and sorting.

"In the past the band has had little involvement in forestry but if the community can start getting younger people trained they will be able to recognize what is going on and will be better able to assess what the community forestry opportunities are." explains Mr. Pierre.

"It was interesting to observe during a site visit in July, examples of some of the traditional values which are considered important to the band," says Randy Butcher, Project Officer for the FNFP. "For example, trees selected for cutting on the forest licence are each visually assessed and marked if they are to be harvested. Honeysuckle vines have spiritual significance to the Lower Kootenay people; therefore, trees with honeysuckle are identified and protected from being harvested. On another note, if a person had an opportunity to see their woodlot they would observe that the area slopes downhill towards the public road. Therefore, looking up the hill from the road you would think that you would be able to see some evidence of logging (such as open areas) but this is not the case. In fact it is difficult to see any disturbance at all."

Other evidence of the LKIB's interest in resource development with minimal harm to the environment is their decision to build less roads on their woodlot. Road building is a major development cost write-off. Therefore, the band is incurring higher skidding costs due to longer skidding distances because it is easier on the environment if fewer roads are built. One more observation in the woodlot is the extent to which the band went to preserve wildlife habitat. When the original stand assessments were taking place, a hawk's nest was sited in the crown of one of the trees. The band brought in wildlife biologists who confirmed the species as a Goshawk and identified the bird's habitat needs and nesting trees. Buffer zones were then established around the trees to protect them from harvesting damage.

As Mr. Pierre explained, the importance of this type of training is that it is a stepping stone toward the band getting more involved in the technical side of forestry.

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Small Steps Lead to Success

Matsqui technical trainees (l-r) Louis Morgan and Gus Julian examine maps and photos in the office before heading for the field.

The Matsqui First Nation, located in the Fraser Valley between the cities of Abbotsford and Mission, is a semi-urban community that decided in 1997 to assess the opportunities to develop their relatively small on-reserve forest land base and provide employment for future community members.

"The Matsqui First Nation's forested reserve lands consist of two parcels - approximately 33 hectares of IR #2 adjacent to our residential area and 608 hectares of forest land on Three Islands IR #3 in the Fraser River," explains Alice McKay, Matsqui Spokesperson. "We realized we had to start slowly with so little forest to work with."

Planned forest management activities have occurred on the Matsqui Reserve lands since at least 1957, when the entire portion of Three Islands IR#3 was leased to West Tree Farms Limited (a subsidiary of Scott Paper Ltd.) for a 40-year term. During the lease term, the existing mixed hardwood and coniferous stands were clearcut harvested and reforested with a variety of natural and hybrid poplar. The lease was not renewed in 1997 and the Matsqui First Nation began to explore their options and build their capacity to manage their reserve forest lands. By taking small steps, and with the assistance of the First Nations Forestry Program over the last few years, the community has succeeded.

In 1998, the community carried out a forest inventory of IR #2 and prepared a brief options paper/business plan based on the results of the inventory. The work was carried out by Robin Clark Inc., a forest resource consultant, and the business plan recommended that a small scale logging and milling operation (employing two to four community members) be considered, but that there was less forested land than was expected and the operation would be much more viable if based on a larger forested area.

The community carried out an ecological and timber inventory of Three Islands IR#3. In order to understand the ecological relationships and timber harvesting potential on IR#3, Robin Clark Inc. was again commissioned to complete a field inventory. Sample plots were established on a 200 m x 200 m grid over the entire island by a crew that included community members. The report concluded that most of the island was found to be in young age classes with less than 10% of mature timber remaining. Silviculture treatment options, along with possible non-timber forest products opportunities were outlined. The final conclusion was that a full management plan needed to be completed to ensure the sensitive ecosystems, wildlife habitat and biodiversity values of the island are protected while balancing the ecological, social and economic objectives of the Matsqui First Nation.

The Matsqui First Nation completed their Forestry Management Plan in 2000. The ecosystem based plan was completed with the cooperation of the

Matsqui First Nation

Gus Julian examines vole damage to planted poplar "whips" on Three Islands IR#3.

community and three Matsqui trainee technicians. The inventories carried out in the previous two years laid the foundation for developing a viable and sustainable forest enterprise on the reserve lands. The plan, which is now almost complete, provides for a comprehensive ecosystem network for the reserve lands as well as defining sustainable harvest regimes and innovative silviculture treatments while providing the information needed to apply for Federal Timber Permits to carry out the logging activities.

"The logical progression of these projects, building on each other, was the perfect way for us to proceed," says McKay. "The next phases will be to apply for a provincial Woodlot License and actively manage our lands while providing stable employment, maintaining ecosystem integrity and building community capacity. We look forward to the challenges."

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An Overview of the BC First Nations Forestry Program 1996 - 2001

Background

It has been almost five years since the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) was announced in April 1996 by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) and Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service (CFS).

Jointly funded by the two departments, the program was initiated to assist First Nations in improving economic conditions in status communities by assisting with forestry capacity and development. The program assisted First Nations by supporting projects that enhanced the capacity of communities in forest management and in operating and participating in forest-based businesses and joint ventures. The program supported First Nations in developing better and more varied cooperative partnerships and ventures off-reserve from which long-term jobs could be created. The primary focus was to increase forestry capacity and related business skills through the following objectives:

- To enhance the capacity of First Nations to operate and participate in forest based businesses.
- To increase First Nations partnerships and joint ventures.
- To enhance the capacity of First Nations to sustainably manage forest resources.

A FNFP Management Board comprised of twelve members (nine First Nations and three government representatives from DIAND, CFS and the BC Ministry of Forests) provided overall direction to the program including reviewing and approving project proposals. The program's five-year term expires on March 31, 2001.

Applications to FNFP were solicited through an annual call letter for project proposals that was widely distributed to all bands and tribal councils in BC and to interested businesses, organizations and individuals.

The FNFP Management Board usually met in March to review and approve project proposals. Each proposal was individually reviewed and evaluated against the program guidelines and criteria and approval was based on project merit. The FNFP encouraged the participation of First Nations and other partners in sharing the costs of implementing projects.

Project Proposals

In view of the large number of bands (197) and tribal councils (34) in BC, the FNFP Management Board made a decision in the early stages of the program to be inclusive and to fund as many communities as possible. Subsequently, bands who had not received funding in previous years were favoured, provided proposals were sound. In addition, the Management Board emphasized self-sufficiency and tried to minimize dependency on FNFP by approving "seed" funding or "start-up" funding for projects. This decision assisted in spreading the funding as wide as possible and in making the program more accessible to First Nations throughout the province.

Whispering Pines / Clinton Band Forestry Planning.

Originally a maximum amount of $50,000 per proposal from FNFP was set in the first year of the program, but this was reduced over the years to coincide with the reduction of funding in the program. In the last few years of the program the maximum amount was set at $25,000.

Due to limited program funding and the high intake in the program, the call letter for project proposals was sent out only once per year in the fall.

Program Demand

Over the last five years of the FNFP, 520 project proposals were received, having a total value of approximately $56 million. Of the proposals received, 219 or 42% were approved. In many cases, only portions of these projects could be funded.

In terms of total funding of approved projects, $19.1 million was requested from the program against a total budget of $4.4 million (FNFP funding was 23% of what was requested).

Project Leveraging

The contributions and commitments by First Nations and other partners to projects funded over the five years was approximately twice the amount of funding provided by the FNFP.

First Nations communities have worked hard in forging partnerships in meeting the FNFP's objective of leveraging other sources of funding.

Types of Projects

The 219 proposals that have been funded over the course of the program reflect the broad spectrum of projects and activities that were eligible for funding under the FNFP.

Examples of the types of projects funded included market and feasibility studies, business plans, forest management planning, business development, joint ventures and partnerships, silviculture

Boothroyd Band's brushing and weeding project.

treatments, and forest management and business training. Other activities included support to First Nations organizations, minor capital investments and assisting with workshops, meetings and conferences.

Employment and Benefits

Projects approved by the FNFP created over 800 direct jobs in First Nations communities and generated almost 9,000 person-weeks of employment with the funding from the program.

A total of 25 forestry and business workshops were delivered and 116 forestry-related studies and plans were completed.

Program Awareness

In terms of awareness and communications, over 200 media "NewsTips" providing project descriptions were released to newspapers and radio in the geographic area of funded projects. To reach First Nations communities and other interested groups and individuals, a mailing list of over 800 was maintained. There were seven editions of the program newsletter, "the Bridge" as well as fourteen editions of the success stories publication, "Building Strength".

An informative and active FNFP web page on the CFS Victoria website has generated numerous inquires about projects and requests for pro-

gram information from throughout Canada and abroad. The web site (www.pfc.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/main/programs/fnfp) provides information on the program and the projects that were funded. It also contains information on the applications, guidelines, newsletters and other program products. A link to the national FNFP web site (www.fnfp.gc.ca) is also provided.

Collaboration with Other Agencies

At the project level the FNFP encouraged First Nations to forge partnerships and leverage additional funding from other sources. The Management Board also attempted to do this at the program level.

After the early years of developing and implementing the program, the Board began looking at forging working relationships with federal, provincial and industry organizations. The Management Board recognized that there was a number of other government agencies that were also involved in the delivery of forestry and business related programs to First Nations.

To investigate potential linkages with these agencies, the Management Board in September 1998 established a subcommittee or Forest Opportunities Working Group comprised of six Board members. The goal set for the Working Group was to identify agencies and determine whether there was potential in developing working relationships that could potentially harmonize programs and enhance efforts to deliver services to First Nations in BC.

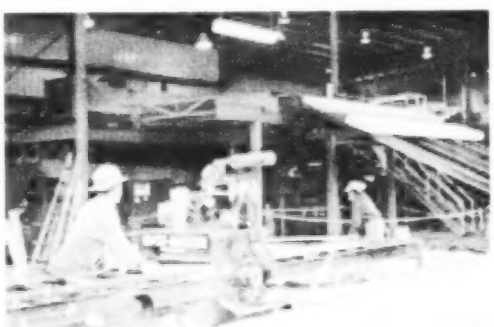
In November 1998 the Working Group hosted a meeting in Vancouver of agencies that offered forestry-related programs to First Nations. Twelve representatives from federal and provincial government agencies and the forest industry participated. The meeting was an encouraging first step in bringing programs together to exchange information and to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Subsequent to this meeting, the Working Group submitted proposals to the Post Delgamuukw Capacity Panel and to the Capacity Initiative Council in December 1998 and in May 1999 respectively, to continue exploring opportunities to increase cooperative working relationships.

In September 1999 the Working Group continued interacting with other agencies to form partnerships to improve and harmonize the delivery of programs and services to First Nations. A study was undertaken to interact with the other agencies to identify potential opportunities and to make recommendations on steps that could be taken to formalize partnerships where opportunities were identified.

Opportunities for partnerships included shared management models, coordinated program communications, streamlined application processes, shared expertise, joint review committees, administration of funding program for other agencies, co-funded projects, and co-sponsorships of information sessions and workshops.

In December 1999 a report was completed that identified potential collaborations and partnerships in the area of FNFPs. The report "Opportunities for Developing Partnerships" was based on discussions with the Working Group and research and interviews with ten key agencies and programs related to First Nations forestry in BC.



Manual edger at Ditidaht First Nation saw mill.

As a result of the study the FNFP and Forest Renewal BC (FRBC) identified an opportunity to work closer together and developed a partnership agreement. Through this agreement FRBC and FNFP agreed to co-fund nine projects that were submitted to FNFP in 2000/01 that met the core outcomes of both programs – expanding businesses, creating new jobs, leveraging funds and developing joint ventures.

Another example was a partnership between FNFP and DIAND's Resource Access Negotiations Program (RAN). The FNFP and RAN have worked closely together over the course of the program exchanging and sharing information. During the last two years this relationship was enhanced to include a joint review committee comprised of FNFP Board members and RAN representatives. This committee reviewed and approved RAN proposals for the 1999/00 and 2000/01 fiscal years.

Aboriginal Forest Industries Council

At a meeting of the FNFP Management Board on October 14, 1999, direction was given to the Forest Opportunities Working Group to determine the level of interest in developing an Aboriginal Forest Industries Council (AFIC) in BC. It was felt that the time was right for the formation of such an organization to create a more supportive and collaborative climate for new and existing aboriginal forest tenure holders and forest-based businesses.

A discussion paper on the idea of AFIC was developed in December 1999 and a study was initiated in early 2000 to determine the level of interest within the aboriginal community for such an organization. The discussion paper was widely distributed to approximately 300 individuals and groups including bands and tribal councils, forestry businesses and industry. The results of the survey indicated broad support for the development of AFIC.

Work continued throughout the year on communicating the concept of AFIC to First Nations and other groups for comments and interest. An interactive web site (www.aficouncil.org) was developed to provide additional information on AFIC and to obtain comments from interested individuals. An AFIC Planning Workshop to bring interested individuals and groups together to discuss the future of AFIC took place February 12 - 13, 2001 in Vancouver at the First Nations House of Learning, University of British Columbia.

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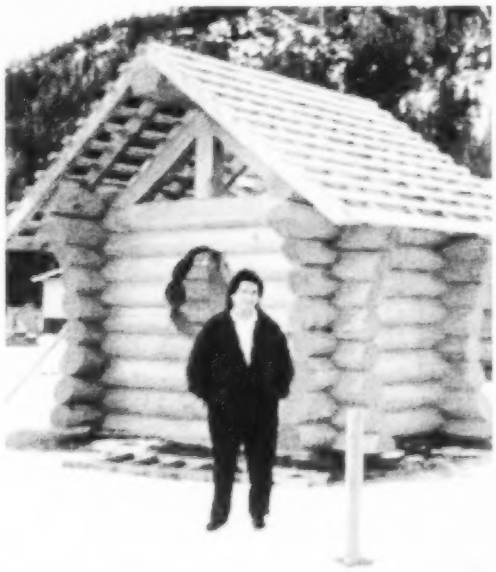

Log home building for business development and training - Nooaitch Band.

Assessing A Wild Huckleberry Business

Caroline Tomma picking huckleberries in the Scotch Creek watershed.

The Little Shuswap Indian Band (LSIB) located near Chase, BC has a goal to develop community employment and business opportunities based on traditional cultural values and resources. The community also wants to enhance its participation and have an influence over natural resource management decisions and resource development activities within their aboriginal interest area. One particular interest that the band is pursuing is assessing the potential business opportunities associated with harvesting and processing wild huckleberries. In an attempt to realize this goal, the LSIB has completed a pilot project to determine the feasibility of starting their own commercial huckleberry business and operating it within their traditional territory.

Over the past several years there has been an increasing number of migrant berry pickers working their way into the area to pick huckleberries (also known as Blue, Globe, Black Huckleberry, and Dampwoods Blueberry), and have been encroaching onto the LSIB's traditional territory. In response, the band took the first step in assessing the economic potential of wild huckleberries by completing, with funds from the First Nations Forestry Program in 2000, a wild berry business feasibility study. This will enable the band to determine the potential for developing a commercial wild berry harvest and examine available marketing avenues. Over time, the LSIB intends to apply the knowledge gained through this project towards a larger strategic objective: managing the entire Scotch Creek watershed.

"The band is working on a comprehensive plan that includes various non-timber values such as mining, bottled natural spring water, a snow cat

operation for back country skiing and guided fly-fishing," explains Andreas Artz, project coordinator. "However, the community's traditional values for any activities will be considered first and foremost. Since the watershed has in the past been extensively logged, all planning will be considered over a long-term planning horizon."

Depending upon how the band wishes to proceed, the next step may be to assess berry productivity and potential berry production. At this stage some site test burning and hand pruning will be considered to see how berry production can be optimized.

"We know that First Nations used to burn in the past to enhance berry production, but we do not know what burning cycles they were using," explains Mr. Artz. "Therefore, the band will be working with the BC Ministry of Forests Research Branch's resident berry expert, Evelyn Hamilton, to do a controlled burn on a small area and then monitor berry production." Once productivity can be forecasted, the potential size of the business, and the ideas developed during the feasibility study phase for products (such as jams), will be pursued.

"We want to create a cultural experience that involves the community, and creates community pride in a traditional activity that makes use of our traditional resources. We also want to create a thriving, profitable agricultural business, to develop our capabilities in food product manufacturing and marketing, and to provide a growing base of well-paying positions that will improve our communities economic base," says Mr. Artz.

While doing this work the band will follow traditional ecological knowledge management regimes. They hope to develop a management model that can be incorporated into future for est enterprises, involving a variety of ethnobotanicals. This will be applicable on a watershed-wide basis, providing employment and

Sandra Coates cooking up a test batch of huckleberry jam.

business opportunities based upon traditional cultural values and resources. It is hoped that this project will lead to renewed and increased community involvement in a traditional harvest that has an emphasis on youth involvement.

However, the band emphasizes that this activity must not adversely affect the wildlife. For example, they do not want to take food away from the bears. "If our benefits are at the expense of wildlife then we will have to curtail our benefits," says Mr. Artz.

The Little Shuswap Indian Band presently owns a lodge and controls a gift shop. Therefore, if this venture proves to be economically viable, it would complement their existing tourist businesses.

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Using the Past to Build Bridges to the Future

Xa'Xtsa (Douglas) Crew discussing plans: (l-r) Thomas Peters, Mark Linger, Chief Darryl Peters, consultant Bernice Patterson, Norman Peters, foreman Roy Charlie.

When Governor James Douglas of the Hudson Bay Company ordered a road to be built along the Lillooet River from Port Douglas at the head of Harrison Lake to Mount Currie in 1858 to access the newly discovered Cariboo gold fields, the Skatin (Skookumchuck) and Xa'Xtsa (Douglas) First Nations had lived in the forests along the river for thousands of years. They concentrated along the river corridor and numerous trails throughout the region fishing, hunting and gathering food.

Over the years, the original trails, as well as the 1858 Cariboo Wagon Road, have been affected by other road construction in the Lower Lillooet River valley, including the present In'SHUCK'ch Forest Service Road. This road was abandoned in 1864 when the Fraser Canyon Road from Yale to Lillooet was completed. However, there are still sections of the original trails and the wagon road which remain virtually unchanged. The European historical resources are identified and protected under the Harrison-Lillooet Gold Rush Trail Management Plan, but the First Nations cultural resources were largely unidentified.

Each of these First Nations now finds their traditional territory in relative isolation, with many members living in urban centres in the Fraser Valley. In order to rebuild their communities, they recognized the need to establish an economic base to draw their people home. It seemed logical to try to do this through their close ties to the forest and the historical significance of their territories. Hunters and fishermen currently frequent the valley, as do tourists seeking either the numerous hot springs in the valley or the gold rush historic sites (such as Port Douglas).

Eco-tour operators in the Whistler/Pemberton area are starting to take note and express interest in the area. The current absence of signs and designated access points leads to incidents of trespass and vandalism of both First Nations cultural resources and damage to remaining buildings or other artifacts of the Gold Rush Trail.

In 2000, the First Nations Forestry Program provided funding to each of these First Nations to undertake a preliminary archaeological reconnaissance of the trail corridor, reconstruct and rehabilitate portions of the trail after community

Skatin Crew, Ministry of Forests Squamish District staff and FNFP staff in front of a roadhouse dating from the early 1860's: (l-r) Sydney Hunter, Johnny Thomas Jr., John Crooks (MoF), Art Shortreid (FNFP), foreman Desi Williams, MoF District Manager Paul Kaster, Colette Fouchon (MoF) and Mark Willmott (MoF).

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consultations, and construct and erect appropriate signage along the current logging road in conjunction with the BC Ministry of Forests (BCMoF) Squamish District Office staff.

In total, approximately 20 km of trail/wagon road were surveyed in August 2000 by an archaeologist familiar with the area and representatives of the two communities. The trail sections were physically walked and First Nations historical locations were mapped (culturally modified trees, pit house pits and fishing locations along the river). Portions of the trail were identified as suitable for both protecting and developing historically important sites (First Nations and European).

The trail alignment, designated access points and features to be protected were clearly mapped. The Xa'Xtsa and Skatin Communities then had a chance to review the plan in detail and have it approved by their respective Councils. Trail improvements and signage on Crown land were also subject to approval by the BCMoF's District Manager.

Through September and October, crews from each community worked on their sections of the trail, cutting brush and saplings, removing windfalls and dangerous snags, and improving some of the stream crossing structures. This work provided employment for community members who were able to upgrade their forestry skills. It gave the crew foremen additional opportunities to provide leadership to their crews while developing their own management and reporting skills. The communities, with the Chiefs and Councils, provided the guidance and vision for the project, but the foremen provided the passion that was needed to complete the hard physical labour required.

Signs are being erected that conform to district-wide BCMoF standards but which have a First Nations flavour with traditional carvings on the sign uprights. The BCMoF is working with the communities and their elders to develop appropriate wording and have expressed interest in having the First Nation names shown on signs and in brochures that meet with the desires of the communities.

Eventually, these communities hope that, in conjunction with their neighbours, Samahquam and Lil'wat First Nations, they will be able to ensure that they maintain the network of cultural and historical sites within the Lillooet River Valley. Meanwhile, this initial eco-tourism management/forestry recreation project is allowing the Skatin and Xa'Xtsa communities to improve the stewardship of the cultural and forest resources under their direct control and consider in an orderly way how they should use the available resources for improved community economic development and employment opportunities.

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Portion of the wagon road at approximately Mile 17 (Skatin traditional territory) showing the stability of the road after almost 150 years.

In partnership with First Nations

Natural Resources Canada | Ressources naturelles Canada
Canadian Forest Service | Service canadien des forêts

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